

# Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

Issue 100  
July/August 2013

## The University is Getting All the Ducks in a Row to Fight Mosquitoes

MELODY LI

Although this summer in New York City has proven extremely rainy and stormy, Rockefeller University has declared drought for its fountains this year. A recent petition addressed to the University community (although the University staff did not receive the email) might shed light on the rationale behind the decision. Some parents and professors on campus, are concerned that the fountains might provide a breeding ground for mosquitoes, which were particularly aggressive last summer and might have spread from the Faculty Club gardens all the way to the children's playgrounds. Quoted from the petition, "Through the end of summer children were coming back home every day covered in bites, just from being in the playgrounds, despite daily and frequent application of repellents." In addition to the children, the Plant Operations and Security personnel were being bitten constantly as their jobs require them to work outside most of the time. Due to the fear that mosquitoes might carry West Nile virus and/or other emerging viruses, the parents' petition urged the University to shut down the fountains for the year.

The Philosopher's Garden fountains were designed as part of the University landscape master plan in the 1950s by the late, seminal landscape architect Dan Kiley, featured in the May 2010 *Natural Selections* issue (<http://selections.rockefeller.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/ns-05-2010.pdf>). The fountains were installed as part of that plan in 1956, to dampen the traffic noise from York Avenue and to create a beautiful visual display in the gardens by the Faculty Club and have been turned on seasonally. This year the fountains have been turned on for special events, such

as Women in Science and Convocation, implying that the University recognizes the aesthetics and prestige the fountains bring to the campus. Kiley had a grand vision when he designed the outdoor space at RU, which was to "link the human and nature in such a way as to recall our fundamental place in the scheme of things." Thanks to him, employees and visitors of RU can temporarily escape from the hustle and bustle of Manhattan and find themselves soothed by the fragrances of different flowers and plants, and the sound of the running fountains. It turns out that not only humans, but other animals also take great pleasure in visiting this secluded oasis. Among them, ducks are the most loyal visitors. Every spring, the ducks come to RU to make nests and raise ducklings.

Many people find the ducks adorable and consider them an integral part of the University community. They have even made several appearances on the official University website (<http://www.rockefeller.edu/about/sustainability/campus/>), Facebook and Twitter sites (<https://twitter.com/RockefellerUniv/status/339500140987551744>). The ducks add to the ambiance of the campus and give children an opportunity to appreciate animals and their developmental cycle. With the fountains closed, duck supporters on campus are worried that the drought might negatively impact the ducks. Alzatta Fogg, who is the Dining Room Manager of Abby, has served the University for decades. She believes "as an institute of science it is important to provide various species with a safe and natural environment, and it is a small part which each one of us can play to ensure the preservation of nature around us." Even though the ducks are wild birds and the University does not have



(Photograph courtesy of  
The Rockefeller University)

the responsibility to care for them, is it not humane to provide for their needs once they are on campus? Holly Hunnicutt, a bird rescuer for The Wild Bird Fund, said the ducks had been around since before she joined the Lulu and Anthony Wang Laboratory of Neural Circuits and Behavior as an administrative assistant, almost eight years ago. She described herself as "pro-ducks," and strongly believes that the University should provide food for the ducks and support them until they are rescued and put back into their natural environment. However, Hunnicutt also realized how bringing wildlife onto campus in a metropolitan setting could be a dividing force for the University community.

According to Alexander Kogan, Associate Vice President of Physical Facilities and Housing, there was also a practical side to closing the fountains. He pointed out that the fountains require a very large amount of water and constant maintenance for proper function. The energy and water costs are not minimal, and the presence of the ducks further complicated the maintenance

of the fountains. Kogan has received many complaints in the past that the fountains needed to be cleaned--some were based on aesthetics, while others on the perception that the ducks needed fresh water. The arrival of the ducks on campus every spring is often followed by concerned phone calls about what is good and what is bad for the ducks. The University had to install bridges for the safe entry and exit of the ducklings from the fountains, and mesh screens to prevent the ducklings from being sucked into the pumping system. As the ducks have grown in population over the years, comments and suggestions have also grown. At one time last year the University counted 85 ducks on campus, and lost track of how many ducks visited the campus overall. Others have witnessed the killing of ducklings by adult ducks of another family, suggesting there are not enough resources on campus to support that many duck families. Professor Fernando Nottebohm, who is a duck supporter but understands that fighting mosquitoes should be our first priority, speculates that the drought might have a positive impact on our campus since it would "encourage the ducks to seek a watery world elsewhere, perhaps in Central Park or further north in the Hudson Valley, where the landscape is full of watery breeding opportunities for ducks," and perhaps reduce the number of ducks that come to breed on campus next year.

Recently, the University has decided to spray synthetic pesticide on campus,

despite that The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene hasn't detected any West Nile virus cases for the 2013 season. After all, is it necessary to shut down the fountains? Due to all the rain this season, some people are concerned that the empty fountains might provide even better breeding grounds for mosquitoes as they collect puddles of standing water. According to the website of the Environmental Protection Agency, female mosquitoes lay eggs "directly on or near water, soil and at the base of some plants in places that may fill with water," and the eggs are highly resilient as they "can survive dry conditions for a few months." It is not clear if the University actively drains out the standing water from the fountains after storms.

Water has been the main source of controversy surrounding the risk of exposure to mosquito-born viruses. There are many approaches to effectively target larvae in the fountains before they can mature into adult mosquitoes and disperse. One way would be to keep the water flowing. Others have suggested the use of organic larvicides, bacteria or mosquitofish that are not toxic to wildlife. That way the fountains could be kept on and the ducks could come back for their swimming lessons. When asked whether the University has tried using organic pesticides in the past, Kogan mentioned that mosquitofish are not an option since "Kiley did not design the fountains for fish and, should

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we attempt to maintain fish, we would likely have to modify many aspects of how the fountains function and how we maintain them." However, he did not address the use of organic larvicides or bacteria. Last year the University also installed some mosquito traps that use carbon dioxide to attract and eradicate mosquitoes. Kogan commented on the fact that the traps work well but "it's a constant effort to find the best locations for the traps in order to achieve maximum efficiency."

All in all, whether the fountains should be turned on or not is a very complicated issue. It is clear that there are many conflicting interests and opinions involved. Even though human health comes first, it appears there are many alternative mosquito control measures that have not been fully explored and would allow the fountains to stay on. Ever since the drought has been implemented, it is rare to see ducks around campus. Dr. Leonia Bozzacco, a postdoctoral associate in the Laboratory of Virology and Infectious Disease, recalled fondly that the ducks helped her a lot last year by keeping her toddler busy. There was always a sense of wonder when her daughter watched the ducklings paddle in the water or follow mommy duck around campus in a tidy procession. Isn't that the core of this scientific community that science is inspired by a sense of wonder about our physical world and most of us spend a lifetime uncovering the secrets embedded in the soil of nature? ☉

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**NEEDS YOU!**

# The Fourth of July

AILEEN MARSHALL

This month we celebrate the Fourth of July. But do you know what we are really celebrating? It's not just a day of picnics and fireworks. The holiday is also known as Independence Day. It marks the day the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, signifying America's independence from the United Kingdom.

On July 2, 1776, the Second Continental Congress passed a resolution recognizing the separation of the thirteen colonies from England. Thomas Jefferson finalized the Declaration of Independence and it was signed on July 4 of that year. The Revolutionary War went on for another seven years, but we celebrate on the day the independence was declared. John Adams wrote that the day "will be the most memorable Epocha in the History of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews [Shows], Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more."

John Hancock, President of the Second Continental Congress, was the first to sign the declaration. This is why his signature is the largest, spawning the use of his

name as an idiom for a signature. Benjamin Franklin was the oldest signatory at 70 years old. Two other signers, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, both went on to become presidents and ironically both died on July 4, 1826.

Congress approved fireworks for the Fourth of July in 1777, and from there on, a tradition was born. In 1778, while the Revolutionary War was still being fought, Benjamin Franklin was in Paris, throwing a party for American expatriates, hoping to garner French support for the war. An Independence Day celebration was held in Bristol, Rhode Island in 1785, two years after the war ended, and has continued since then, making it the oldest July Fourth festivity in the country. The first recorded use of "Independence Day" appears in 1791. In 1820, the u.s. Congress passed Independence Day as an unpaid holiday for federal employees and it didn't become a paid holiday until 1938.

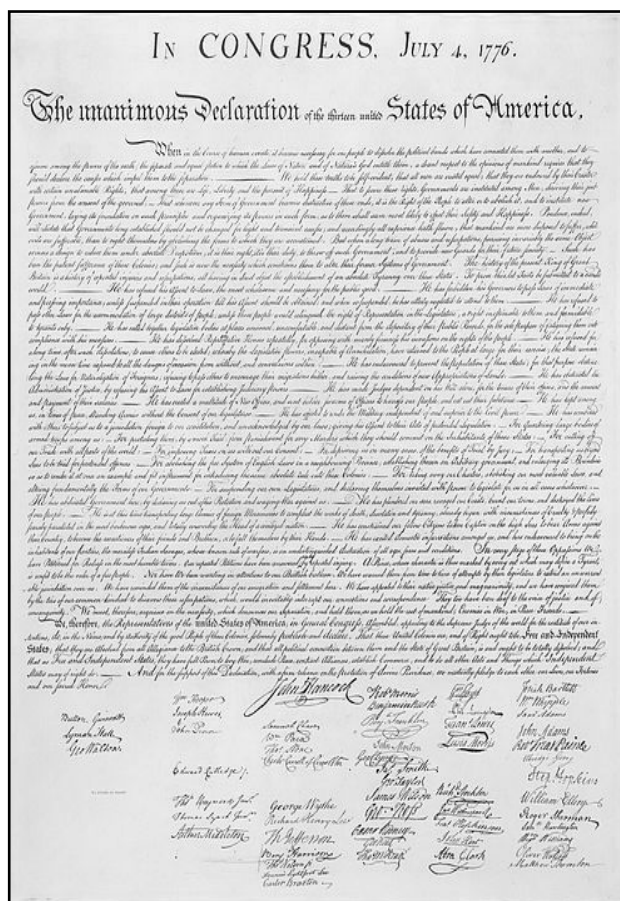
Different traditions associated with the Fourth of July have started over the years. In 1916, a dispute started among four immigrants in Coney Island as to who was the most patriotic. From this time Nathan's hot dog eating contest became another holiday ritual. Since 1959, Detroit, Michigan has held a joint festival with Windsor, Canada, on the Detroit River, as a combined celebration with Canada Day, which is July 1. It is the largest celebration in the country. The famous Boston Pops concert started in 1973. The Macy's fireworks tradition started in 1976, the bicentennial. The "Capital Fourth" concert, held in Washington DC is free and attracts about half a million people a year.

Over the years, July Fourth has come to be celebrated with red, white and blue bunting and clothing, displaying flags and outdoor activities and of course, fireworks. Patriotic songs such as "God Bless America," "America the Beautiful," "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," "This Land Is Your Land," "Stars and Stripes Forever," and "Yankee Doodle" are often played.

This year the Macy's Fireworks will be on the Hudson River again. There will be barges with the famous Gruc-ci pyrotechnics from 23rd Street up to 42nd Street. The soundtrack will be simulcast on 1010 WINS radio station. To avoid the crowds, watch the show on NBC television. ☉



Display of fireworks over the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C.



United States Declaration of Independence, 1823 facsimile of the engrossed copy

# Academic Governance: A Model

DANIEL BRISKIN

An unfortunately high proportion of our elected officials are highly opinionated, but irrational people who let their guts drive their politics; many more of them are voters. With the same concerns in mind as the architects of the Electoral College, I don't want this type of person making decisions for me.

We have had capable people in government, such as former Secretary of Energy and physics Nobel Laureate, Steven Chu. We also have a former Princeton economics professor and department chair Ben Bernanke as the Chairman of the Federal Reserve. Ezekiel Emanuel, a professor of healthcare management and of medical ethics and health policy served as Special Advisor for health policy to the Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget. These are the types of people who I want making decisions at the highest level. Their opinions may differ from mine, and are certainly not in line with all other Americans', but I am confident in these people's ability to make decisions based on facts.

So, how do I get a government wherein the leaders have a higher probability of leading based on fact rather than instinct? For the sake of simplicity, I will start with all 18+ American citizens and apply a series of filters to acquire highly capable potential governmental officers.

I would like a candidate who is able to set goals and attain them. A Fortune 500 CEO shows vast leadership in the ability to guide such a firm, but I am weary of the selfishness of CEOs (as exhibited by the US financial sector). Thus, I want to select against pure and unbridled selfishness while opting for somewhat civic-minded individuals. I do, however, want someone who is good at getting what they want through politicking and networking, a valuable skillset to have for a potential politician. Qualities to actively select for would come from people who work toward somehow ameliorating the world, such as through the acquisition and subsequent dissemination of knowledge; somehow caring about others' welfare.

Thus, who is like a CEO or high-level executive, but shows some outward symptom of compassion for humanity? University professors have at least some mild power over their underlings and they also work to advance the scope of human knowledge and understanding. Additionally, to attain the position of professors, they have risen through their institutes' ranks and therefore many have some skill in navigating bureaucracy. So if professors were to be politicians, what qualifies them for high-level, government positions?

Throughout the United States there are more than one thousand four-year degree-awarding institutions, each with numerous professors, and some professors must have more acclaim and influence both at their universities and in their fields. The whole point of this proposed system is to have the most expert, capable hands in control, but also to make a simple system. Thus, to parse down the number of eligible professors, first choose only high-ranking universities. A way to do this, while still maintaining regional and proportional representation for US citizens, would be that each state selects a number of institutions (proportional to the state's population) to represent the

state at the national level. These institutions could be selected based on pre-existing academic evaluation systems, or a new set of criteria could be specially created. These criteria assume that the quality of a professor correlates directly with the rank of their institution, and this is an assumption I am willing to make. Whereas the above paragraph is surely biased and more exclusive than inclusive, it quickly creates a small pool of eligible candidates who are increasingly likely to be experts in their respective fields.

The current structure of the US government, with different organizations for agriculture, the environment, science, space, defense, etc. could remain largely intact. Different university departments fit nicely into the roles of government: law professors could serve in the courts; political science professors could serve in international relations; scientists could head up different scientific agencies; economists could head the Federal Reserve and Treasury; and so on. Importantly, all departments would have representatives in a legislative body so that each specialty could create laws regarding their field.

This results in a system with proportional localized representation where only the highest-achieving professionals, who on some level have helped to advance humanity, can be in control.

I concede instantly that this proposed government is far from perfect. What about representation of the people? Perhaps a lower legislative body could be created that could introduce bills to be ultimately voted on by the upper legislature consisting of academics. Who will be in charge of the government as a whole? All of the eligible members of government could vote on a former university president to take the lead, for the president would have experience in a leadership role acting as a liaison between a university and the public (or between government/citizens and foreign entities).

My hope would be that by creating a field of academics—those who regularly read and analyze data in their field—they could scientifically approach the world's problems and create and implement novel ideas.

I realize that my idea is not completely novel. Plato proposed his philosopher king thousands of years ago; my ideas outlined above are simply a modern interpretation on the idea of a ruling intelligentsia.

Overall, am I advocating a switch to this proposed form of government? No. For all its flaws, I think a functionally democratic system is the only feasible form of government in free, highly developed nations. I am merely longing for a government in which those in charge would be more effective at their jobs, solve pressing issues, and create progress. Perhaps the American electorate will realize that facts are more important than blind ideals. Perhaps government officials will appoint more high-level advisors from academia. Hard as it is for them to admit, politicians do not know everything; they should embrace the ideals of economic specialization and let experts from each field advise and guide in the never-ending process of political and cultural evolution. ☉



*This Month Natural Selections interviews Marisa Cerio, Laboratory Administrator in the Laboratory of Chromatin Biology & Epigenetics.  
Country of origin: United States.*

## New York State of Mind

**1. How long have you been living in the New York area?** My whole life—thirty three years!

**2. Where do you live?** Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

**3. Which is your favorite neighborhood?** It's not beautiful, but based on the sheer number of great restaurants, venues, and shops, I'd probably have to say Williamsburg. The Snug Harbor/Randall Manor section of Staten Island is really gorgeous though.

**4. What do you think is the most over-rated thing in the city? And underrated?** Manhattan. It's great and all, but if you're living in New York without checking out the outer boroughs, you're definitely not seeing the full picture. There is such an amazing range in diversity of people, cultures, landscapes, and lifestyles within the outer boroughs. And not just Brooklyn—The Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island have some truly wonderful neighborhoods, museums, trails, and, of course, Italian ices.

**5. What do you miss most when you are out of town?** Corner delis! It's amazing how reliant you become on them here. When I'm out of town, I always find myself momentarily at a loss as to where to pick up a drink or a sandwich—especially at night. We are very spoiled by these 24-hour one-stop shops.



**6. If you could change one thing about NYC, what would that be?** I think NYC has lost some of its quirky character in the last few decades. I know it's still there, but you definitely have to look harder for it. Folk attractions like the Avenue B garden or 5 Pointz in Long Island City have been slowly disappearing, and with their disappearance we lose more and more of NYC's local culture. Progress is important, but rec-

ognizing the value in the different stories New Yorkers have to tell—however wacky or weird—is also important!

**7. What is your favorite weekend activity in NYC?** Playing shows with my band, gardening, and making the rounds at local farmers markets.

**8. What is the most memorable experience you have had in NYC?** It's really hard to say since most of my memories growing up are from experiences I've had in NYC. But a few that stand out are: seeing Ed Koch preside over the People's Court live; watching a rogue marching band take over a Staten Island Ferry at midnight and get the entire boat dancing; and running to the local music store to get guitar strings and opening the door to see George Harrison directly in front of me. Only in New York!

**9. If you could live anywhere else, where would that be?** Portland, OR or Scotland.

**10. Do you think of yourself as a New Yorker?** Of course! Aside from the fact that I grew up here, I think I've got an open-mindedness that is very characteristic of New Yorkers. On any given day, chances are that I'm going to experience something that is new to me. You have to be open to everyone and everything here. Few things shock a New Yorker! ☺

*The Natural Selections Editorial Board would like to thank Melina Herman for her years of tireless, dedicated service to the Board and also to congratulate her on her graduation this year. Melina graduated from the St. Giles Laboratory of Human Genetics of Infectious Diseases in December and left The Rockefeller University officially in June. Melina has been a member of the Natural Selections Editorial Board since February 2009. The past few years she has been a one woman force in organizing and producing Natural Selections and although much of her work was behind-the-scenes, we must take time to recognize her selfless effort to ensure a high-quality publication (especially when there are now four of us trying to do the work of one!) We thank Melina for all of her hard work and wish her the best in all her future endeavors. ☺*



# Skulls and Specimens: The Mütter Museum is Weird and Worth It

CLAIRE WARRINER



Main Gallery of Philadelphia's Mütter Museum, George Widman, 2009

*A similar version of this article appeared in The Incubator*

In April, I found myself in Philadelphia as a guest at the wedding of two people I'd never met. In addition to stuffing myself with Crab Rangoon and avoiding eye contact with the groom's mother, I visited the gruesomely fascinating Mütter Museum of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Often described as a museum of oddities, the three-room space houses the extensive anatomical and pathological collection of Dr. Thomas Dent Mütter, a plastic surgeon who was active in the city between 1841 and 1850.

The most visually striking feature of the museum is The Hyrtl Skull Collection. Each skull is accompanied by a small handwritten note card that reads

more like a turn-of-the-century novella than a medical history, i.e. "Prague, Araschtau Gottlieb, age 19, Suicide by potassium cyanide because of suspected unfaithfulness of his mistress, Right supraorbital notch, long nasal aperture." The display also contains a so-called "hydrocephalic imbecile" with an unsettlingly offset jaw and a disproportionate number of "gypsy" skulls, perhaps mirroring the entrenched racism of the times.

Opposite the display are a set of otherwise unremarkable hardcover books whose leather bindings are made of, evidently, human skin. Next to these is an array of very large, nineteenth-century gynecological instruments that are enough to make any woman's cervix crawl up inside her thoracic cavity. Other interesting artifacts in the collec-

tion include a bladder stone the size of a peach pit, a wax model of "moist gangrene of the hand," a liver deformed by years under the pressure of a corset, and a desiccated corpse, sans skin, the chin of which, tilts upward and arms spread outward in a position of heavenly ascent. Furthermore, the museum has not one, not two, but three diencephalic fetuses at various stages of development.

Of all the pieces in the museum, it was the giant human colon, a product of Hirschsprung's Disease, that is the most unforgettable. Appearing at first to be a lumpy bolster pillow, it lies in a dusty display case beneath the stairs. At approximately four by one feet, the colon was capable of holding 40 pounds of feces. The human vehicle of this enormous tube suffered chronic constipation, a distended abdomen, and

could go up to a month without a bowel movement. The giant colon, like the entire Mütter Museum itself, inspires a heady mixture of awe and disgust at the idea that something as familiar as the human body can deviate along so

many dark paths into the strange lands of pathology. Definitely worth a visit if you're ever in Philadelphia. •

More information on <http://www.collegeofphysicians.org/mutter-museum/>



The Hyrtl Skull Collection,  
George Widman, 2009



Compare and contrast - Giant, Dwarf, and Average  
Skeleton, George Widman, 2009

## The Comic Strip

CONTRIBUTED BY DANIEL BRISKIN



“My biology grad student friends tell me that different types of alcohol don’t actually have different effects. I trust their expertise, not because of the ‘biology’ part, but because of the ‘grad student’”.

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## Culture Desk

### Book Reviews: *Inferno* by Dan Brown and *The Inferno of Dante* (translated by Robert Pinsky)

BERNIE LANGS

When I heard that best-selling author Dan Brown had written a book centering around a mystery involving Dante's *Inferno*, I came up with a scheme to read the original *Inferno* section of Dante Alighieri's famous poem, *Commedia* (which later became known as "The Divine Comedy"), and compare the two works for *Natural Selections*. This is perhaps the only reason, I knew, that I'd ever read a book by Brown or the hellish work by Dante. I've read other poetry by Dante, as well as his work *La Vita Nuova* ("The New Life"), but avoided the *Inferno* for completely superstitious reasons. As for Brown, when his tens-of-millions bestselling book, *The Da Vinci Code*, hit stores with its tale of Professor Robert Langdon, a Harvard symbologist, I wasn't just angry that he'd changed the playing field of the publishing business forever--making the publishing houses crave only huge blockbusters akin to film industry's obsession with the big opening weekend. No, Brown became the only writer I've ever felt bitter towards, because I'd been writing books about messages in paintings and global intrigue for years; the difference being that my books had print-runs of about ten copies. Thus, I'd never stand a chance to be published and someone had beaten me to the punch.

Briefly put, my avoidance of reading about Dante's trip to hell, which he wrote in the early 14th century, was based on an idea that my music teacher in college once said: "Once you play an original song for the class, it's in their heads forever, so be careful what you play for us." To put it simply, I didn't want a stark vision of hell in my mind for the rest of my life. In addition, in a state of great inebriation in 1979, I began to read a vintage 1948 copy of *The Divine Comedy* with horrifying illustrations by Gustave Doré, and after about twenty pages, the book began again! The publisher had misprinted the book. I stopped reading, and in my agitated state, I remember to this day wondering if that is what hell is, a horrifying repetition from which there is no escape. Circles of hell indeed.

That said, I made it through Brown's book, *Inferno*, and Robert Pinsky's fabulous translation of the *Inferno* unscathed (so far).



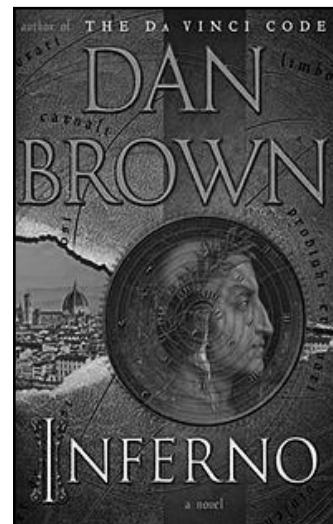
Gustave Doré's engraving depicting a lost Dante in Canto 1 of the *Inferno*

Of course, there were moments of disturbing coincidence between Brown's and Dante's works: Brown referenced Doré's illustrations at least twice and the footnotes of the *Inferno* saying that the poet leaves hell, from what is discerned from historical accounts, on April 9, 1300 (I was born on April 9). That said, I have to say that I enjoyed Brown's book, which follows Robert Langdon's frantic attempt, while facing a bout of clichéd amnesia, to stop a global contagion from being released. I was deeply disappointed in the writing, however, which feels a need to keep the action going

at any cost, without breaking for any style or nuance. I was turning the Kindle pages quickly, but found the heavy-handed messages about a drastic need to curtail global overpopulation simplistic. I was happy and excited that the book took the reader through the much-loved cities of Florence and Venice, veering eventually to an exotic Istanbul. But in the end, it's really an exercise in catchiness, coming up miles short of anything resembling literature. Which is what Mr. Brown most definitely intends.

It's almost unfair to compare Brown's book to Dante's masterpiece, since one can argue that the very pillars of all Western writing are the two Bibles, Homer, Shakespeare, and the *Commedia*. I approached the poem with the thought of taking all I've gleaned from reading about Medieval life and all the paintings, sculpture, mosaics, and illuminated manuscripts I've viewed over the years and plopping Dante's work in the middle of it, putting it in historical context, but this strategy didn't work. Because, as much as one reads of the violence of war in the Middle Ages or the beginning of the Renaissance period, no matter how many paintings of tortured Saviors and Saints one views, nothing prepares one for the cold-hearted descriptions of violence from a witness to the times such as Alighieri. I'm sure he makes up for much of the terror in the later two sections of the poem, Purgatory (*Purgatorio*), and Paradise (*Paradiso*), but the cruelty depicted in the *Inferno* is really over the top. Much of hell is inhabited by political, and often, barbaric, real figures from the days during which Dante lived. In essence, we journey through the poet's mind, where the terrors of hell are all too real, and on arrival, he populates it with many of his enemies. I much prefer the work of the later poet, Francesco Petrarca, who like Dante, reverently references tales and figures from the ancient world. Petrarca's verses are ethereal and beautiful, and he is bent on love and tenderness in much of his work.

Fifteen years ago, I wrote a free-form poem that took the protagonist through a netherworld between life and death and I based it on what I imagined Dante's *Inferno* was like. My hero's guide in my book was the late guitarist, Brian Jones, as opposed to Dante's guide from antiquity, the poet Virgil. It was interesting to see where I'd guessed right about the *Inferno* and wrong. With Brown, I wrote a book about five years ago featuring an obnoxious know-it-all writer as one of the characters who has a bestseller called "The Michelangelo Conspiracy." What I've learned is that Brown is a lover of Italy and its treasures, much like myself. And, of course, symbols. I heard the print-run of *Inferno* is huge, but much less than *The Da Vinci Code*. The print run of my own books is down as well – I handed out four copies of my last novella! ♦





# Infographic

## A World Map of Rockefeller University

ALESSIA DEGLINCERTI

Ever wondered how international RU is? Take a look at the map below, the countries colored in black are all represented among the RU population (based on country of citizenship; students and employees with an academic appointment only, it does not include guests or visitors to the campus). The table provides the count by country as of June 2013.

Thanks to Maria Lazzaro, Director of Immigration and Academic Appointments, for providing the information! ☺

*Privacy notice: only the numbers by country of citizenship were collected and no other personal information*



Argentina	13	India	25	Serbia	1
Australia	6	Iran	1	Sierra Leone	1
Austria	3	Ireland	3	Singapore	1
Belgium	2	Israel	29	Slovenia	1
Brazil	14	Italy	22	South Africa	1
Bulgaria	1	Japan	33	South Korea	27
Cameroon	1	Kenya	1	Spain	18
Canada	18	Lebanon	1	Sweden	23
Chile	3	Lithuania	1	Switzerland	5
China	85	Luxembourg	1	Taiwan	12
Colombia	4	Mexico	2	The Netherlands	5
Cyprus	1	Morocco	1	Turkey	10
Czech Republic	3	Nepal	1	Ukraine	1
Denmark	4	New Zealand	4	United Kingdom	16
Estonia	1	Pakistan	3	United States	354
France	37	Philippines	4	Venezuela	1
Germany	59	Poland	5	Yugoslavia	6
Greece	5	Portugal	7	Other	6
Hong Kong	1	Romania	5		
Hungary	1	Russia	8	<b>Grand total</b>	<b>908</b>

“Other” includes dual citizenship or unknown citizenship.

# For Your Your Consideration—Ones to Watch Vol. 1 Edition

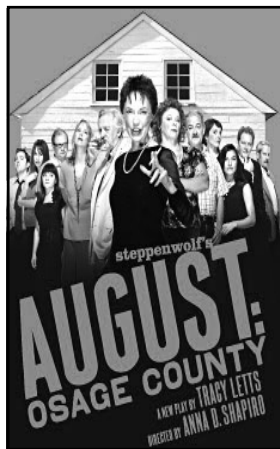
JIM KELLER

First, an apology for my hiatus since May to the one or two of you who read this column regularly and who don't mind that it's virtually devoid of science. But luckily, I've returned in time to begin the first of a four-part *Ones to Watch* series. As was the case last year, each edition will examine some of the more tangible roles heading down the pipeline and the pedigree of the actors who inhabit them—some of whom may find themselves vying for a top spot come Oscar time. This installment focuses on some of the leading ladies who may find themselves in this year's Oscar race. Before we get started, let's review some of the names that appeared in last year's column and how their Oscar season (or lack thereof) shook out.

Anne Hathaway originally appeared under lead actress, which was subsequently amended to supporting—she went on to win the Best Supporting Actress Oscar for *Les Misérables*. Sandra Bullock was also a one-time hopeful, but since her film, *Gravity*, was pushed back, she too was pushed back, and appears again in this column. Marion Cotillard narrowly missed a nomination for *Rust and Bone*; after having appeared in this column, she returns again, this time for *The Immigrant*. Finally, Carey Mulligan appeared last year for *The Great Gatsby* and, unless you're living under a rock, you know that film was pushed back to this year, but Mulligan likely will not figure in this year's Oscar race.



**THE QUEEN BEE:** Meryl Streep – *August: Osage County* (director: John Wells):



**FYC:** In the film adaptation of Tracy Letts' Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning play of the same name, a family overcomes its differences when its alcoholic patriarch goes missing and its members unite to find him. Set in Oklahoma in August (go figure!), the film concerns itself with Violet Weston (Streep), the family's cancer-suffering matriarch who has developed a drug addiction, along with her daughters and a live-in caretaker hired by Violet's husband, Beverly (Sam Shephard). The mouth-watering plot is exciting enough—add Streep to the mix and, wow! She needs no introduction, having won three Oscars—two in lead (*Sophie's Choice* in 1983 and *The Iron Lady* in 2011, respectively) and one in supporting (*Kramer vs. Kramer* in 1980). She's been nominated a whopping 17 times and is a force to be reckoned with on and off-screen. I could go on, but suffice it to say, the only thing standing in her way (outside of the requisite competition) is the director, who has only helmed one other feature film, *The Company Men* (2010).

**AMERICA'S SWEETHEART:** Sandra Bullock – *Gravity* (director: Alfonso Cuarón):

**FYC:** Bullock portrays Dr. Ryan Stone, a medical engineer who becomes the lone survivor of her first space mis-



sion after debris crash into the shuttle during a spacewalk. Following the mission, Dr. Stone desperately tries to return to Earth and reunite with her daughter. Accompanied only by George Clooney, who plays veteran astronaut and commander Matt Kowalsky, the film suggests something along the lines of *127 Hours* (2010), which put forth a serious case for James Franco to win in the Best Actor category, largely due to the film's "one man show" aspect. We'll have to wait and see if this is the case here, but I don't think anyone can forget Bullock's Best Actress race in 2009 with Meryl Streep where Bullock walked away with a win for *The Blind Side*.

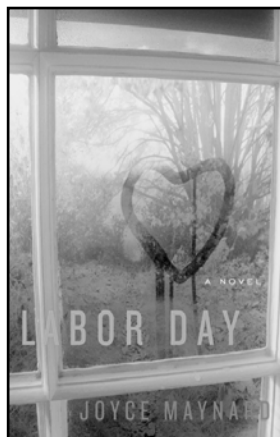
**THE RISING STAR:** Bérénice Bejo – *The Past* (director: Asghar Farhadi):



**FYC:** In this French drama, an Iranian man deserts his French wife and two children to return to his homeland. When his wife (Bejo) subsequently be-

gins a new relationship, her husband is forced to confront this cold reality upon his wife's request for a divorce. Bejo turned a lot of heads as the "silent" partner in *The Artist* (2011) and went on to earn a Supporting Actress nomination for the role. Given that the silent film showcased only a fraction of her abilities, when she was cast in *The Past*, many became curious as to what she might unleash. This curiosity was quelled at the close of this year's Cannes Film Festival when she won the Best Actress award. The film also vied for the Palm d'Or and won the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury. Iranian Farhadi directed Best Foreign film winner, *A Separation* (2011), which netted him a Best Writing, Original Screenplay nomination in 2012.

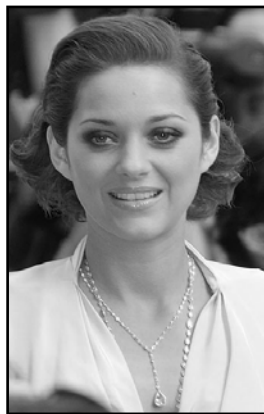
**WORLD'S GREATEST MOM:** Kate Winslet – *Labor Day* (director: Jason Reitman):



**FYC:** In this adaptation of Joyce Maynard's novel set in 1987, a depressed single mom, Adele (Winslet) and her son unwittingly offer a wounded, frightful escaped convict a ride. As police search the town for him, the two gradually learn his true story as their options become increasingly limited. Winslet excels in taught dramas and there's no reason that she wouldn't do well here. This brings to mind *Revolutionary Road* (2008) and *Little Children* (2006), the latter of which earned her a Best Actress nomination and the former of which

should have. Both of these were adapted from the novels that preceded them. All together Winslet has five nominations under her belt—two in supporting (*Sense and Sensibility* in 1996 and *Iris* in 2002) and three in lead (*Titanic* in 1998, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* in 2005 and the aforementioned *Little Children*), as well as a leading win for *The Reader* in 2009. Reitman began his own laundry list of credits beginning in 2008 with a Best Director nomination for *Juno* and racked up three more in 2010 for *Up in the Air* (Best Director, Best Picture, and Best Writing, Adapted Screen play).

**THE FOREIGNER:** Marion Cotillard – *The Immigrant* (director: James Gray):



**FYC:** Here French actress Cotillard portrays Sonya, an immigrant woman tricked into a life of prostitution, until a magician (Jeremy Renner) tries to save her and reunite her with her sister, who is being held on Ellis Island. Having won the Best Actress Oscar in 2008 for *La Vie En Rose*, Cotillard soon became a household name and she gave a searing performance in last year's *Rust and Bone* as I mentioned previously. Her role in *The Immigrant*, which also competed for the Palm d'Or at this year's Cannes Film Festival, is said to be one of her best—though critics said the same of her performance last year. Gray has enjoyed previous success on the Palm d'Or circuit with *The Yards*, *We Own the Night* (2000 and 2007, respectively), and *Two Lovers* (2008).

**THE NEW YAWKAH:** Cate Blanchett – *Blue Jasmine* (director: Woody Allen):



**FYC:** This film follows a fashionable New York housewife to San Francisco where she reconnects with her sister after a life crisis prompts the visit. Details on this one are under lock and key, but the film's trailer reveals Blanchett as a well-to-do woman trying desperately to hold it together in the midst of whatever darkness plagues her. The Australian-born actress is perhaps best known for her Oscar-nominated performance as Elizabeth I in *Elizabeth* (1998)—a role she went on to reprise in 2007 for *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, which earned her a second lead actress nomination in 2008 and put the cap on a string of three Best Supporting Actress nominations (*The Aviator*, *Notes on a Scandal*, *I'm Not There*, 2005, 2007, and 2008, respectively). An early screening of the film at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMa) had the audience talking up a storm about her performance and with Allen at the helm, that comes as no surprise.

There are several other leading performances to be seen this year and the clock has just started on a race that is sure to be full of ups and downs and surprises all around. The Academy can be a fickle beast, so there's no telling for sure what it will choose as the top contenders of the year, but for now, the list will grow and shift as a clearer picture begins to take shape. ☉

## *Life on a Roll*



*Arc de Triomphe from La Défense*



*The Statue of Liberty in Paris*



*Under the Bridge*

All photos contributed by Elodie Pauwels, <http://elodiepphoto.wordpress.com>

